

Three

by Andrew Roe

Men and their inevitable disappointments—sure, why not?

Take Alan.

No, wait.

Let's take Steve first.

Steve wanted more. Steve wanted something he could not name.

The thing he wanted that he could not name was not me.

"I'm sorry," Steve said. "I'm so fucking sorry. I wish it was different.

I wish I was different."

He'd called me on my cell phone, the battery almost dead. I think I was driving somewhere.

"Listen," I told Steve. "Don't ever say that. Don't ever say you wish you were different or someone else or whatever. Not for me. Not for any woman. Or man. Just don't."

Okay then, now Alan.

Alan smoked a lot of cigarettes. He always had that smell, taste, aura: I'm a smoker, I've got the goddamn right, and there's nothing you can do about it. Only certain books and music and movies. Once I misidentified a song as a Velvet Underground song when it was in fact a song from a Lou Reed solo album. He freaked.

When he spent the night (rare, like a Bigfoot sighting) we slept in like teenagers and ordered takeout from the Thai place around the corner.

"No pad thai," he said, shirtless, scratching an insignificant tuft of hair on his chest, a habit I was not fond of. "Everybody gets pad thai.

I'm against pad thai. Just the principle of the thing, you know?"

I shouldn't have but I did: I checked his cell phone when he was taking a shower. All the outgoing calls. To Brandi. Yes, Brandi with an "i." He'd been acting pissy for days, getting mad at me for no reason, like why can't you just buy brown rice instead of white rice?

When I mentioned this to a friend, said friend said: "Same thing happened to me. Totally nice guy. Then overnight a dick. Turned out he was looking for a reason to break up. He was pushing me away

because he was hot in the crotch for someone else. I saw the email. That was that. Bitch couldn't even spell."

My friend saw the email. I saw the outgoing cell phone calls.

Technology can really fuck up a guy's luck.

"Who's Brandi?" I asked when he came out of the bathroom, one of my towels wrapped around his thin smoker's waist.

And ending with Troy.

Now Troy I had hopes for, despite the name. He seemed kind and decent without being too much like those guys who are just sad, overgrown, overly needy puppy dogs. But I didn't know what to do with him, and he didn't know what to do with me. We grappled with our obsolescence for weeks.

"Is this it? Are we breaking up?" he asked one night at the bar which, on our second date, we'd christened as our bar, and which—soon—would no longer hold that title.

I took a long sip of my drink. The bar was crowded, the music roared. I had my own disappointments too, after all.

"Were we ever really together?" I said.

